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## **Politics and Tourism in the Mediterranean Region**

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### **Abstract**

This chapter considers a number of salient themes and contradictory tendencies within the politics of tourism in the Mediterranean. Commencing with a brief reflection on the integration of the Mediterranean into European orbits of war, conquest and colonial rule, it foregrounds the importance of tourism in the uneven spread of capitalism throughout the region along with strategies of nationalism and state formation. A salient characteristic of Mediterranean tourism has been the structures of patronage and clientage that have persisted and reinforced a ‘rentier’ system of accumulation in Mediterranean tourism capitalism whilst enabling family micro-enterprises to establish a significant foothold in these industries. The latter part of the chapter then considers how the close alignment between tourism and neoliberal capitalism has given rise to forms of civic resistance, whilst securitization and the re-bordering of the region threaten to fundamentally reconfigure the political geography of Mediterranean tourism and to disrupt the dense yet fragile ties between tourism and the region’s historic cosmopolitanism. Finally, it explores the role of heritage both as a marketable commodity and marker of intra-regional difference, as well as a medium through which alternative, critical narratives of tourism and Mediterranean identities are emerging

## **Tourism, colonialism, and conflict.**

From its earliest times the expansion of travel in the Mediterranean basin has either been over shadowed by or indeed been closely implicated in acts of war, conquest and colonialism. Despite John Mason Cook's proclamation that theirs was a 'business of peace', both the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, a key strategic asset ever since, followed by British imperial subjugation of Egypt by the late 1880s were the platform for the expansion of Thomas Cook & Son's operations further into Egypt and throughout the wider Middle East (Brendon 1991: 189). In North Africa, Hussey (2015: 77) notes how during the first bombardments of Algiers by French forces during in 1830, well-to-do visitors from French high society watched events unfold on board pleasure ships moored off shore. In the wake of the French conquest of Algeria in 1834 tourists became increasingly frequent visitors to Algiers while a few accompanied military expeditions into the interior commenting upon 'the savage beauty of the countryside and the people' (Hussey 2015: 105). Before we consign such distasteful forms of entertainment to a time pre-dating international human rights and political ethics, more recently, the Israeli bombardment of Gaza during 'Operation Protective Edge' in 2014, was observed from roof-top chairs and sofas by residents of adjacent Israeli towns (Mackey 2014). As Lisle (2007) remarks, the geopolitics of tourist gaze is rather more complex and fuzzy than conventional juxtapositions of tourism and politics would suggest as evinced by the propensity of admittedly, small numbers of tourists, to visit sites of conflict, including in the Balkans and Occupied Palestinian Territories.

During the nineteenth century the struggle for territorial control and resources to supply the growth of capitalist industry amongst the rising

state powers of Europe led to the eventual invasion, annexation and integration of the southern and eastern Mediterranean shore into the orbits of metropolitan European power. Whilst this comprised a series of militaristic imperial ventures the European penetration of the southern shores also gave further impetus to manifold economic, social and cultural connections between northern and southern Mediterranean shores that were to mark the cross-fertilization of identities and language across the region as well as shape intra-Mediterranean movements of people (Tarrius 2002). More significantly, in terms of the representational politics and the trans-Mediterranean architecture of travel that was to follow, the rise of belligerent nationalisms of the late nineteenth century and the world wars of the first half of the twentieth century was to disrupt and suppress the historic cosmopolitanism of Mediterranean ports and cities. Increasingly, Mediterranean societies became absorbed into the territorial containers of emerging nation-states and their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and confessional fluidity and heterogeneity variously absorbed into post-colonial narratives of nationalism and economic modernization, albeit expressed in varying politico-cultural idioms (see Hourani 2005: 308-310).

Although the arrival of Thomas Cook signalled the end of privilege and with it the expansion of travel throughout the Mediterranean for emerging north European middle classes from the late nineteenth onwards, he was merely following in the footsteps of earlier pilgrimage flows from Europe to the Middle East. Moreover, it was the French company *Club Méditerranée* that was to revolutionize the mass package holiday model and launch it as a key driver of capital accumulation throughout the Mediterranean and beyond after the Second World War. Founded in Paris in 1950 by two veterans of the French and Belgian resistance, *Club*

*Méditerranée* in fact started as a non-profit organization before it later evolved into the billion dollar Chinese-owned multinational corporation it is today. While states played a significant role in the financing and operation of tourism facilities in post-war Mediterranean economies, *Club Méditerranée* provided the launching pad for a model of affordable tourism for a generation scarred by war without the need to for government assistance, built around a network of low cost vacation villages (Furlough 2009: 175).

The Mediterranean has long served as a byword for hedonism, pleasure and sensuous delights while simultaneously being home to some of the most conflictual and unequal regions in the world. Moreover, nowhere else on earth, perhaps the US-Mexico border notwithstanding, does the wealth and power of the advanced industrialized world press up quite so closely and at times, aggressively, against the impoverished South, as so starkly demonstrated by the current large-scale movements of refugees northwards through the region. Nevertheless, the pull of its ancient archaeological sites, pilgrimage centres and historic towns and myriad cultural events and festivals, and more recently, its islands, beaches and glitzy resorts has provided the bedrock upon which many Mediterranean states particularly on the north shore, have engineered a transition to modern capitalist economies albeit with varying degrees of success. This has provided a livelihood for literally dozens of businesses and trades encompassing long-standing local merchant families, foreign ‘lifestyle’ entrepreneurs, migrants from Africa, South Asia and the Middle East selling cheaply produced wares on the beaches, to the larger-scale capitalist enterprises and foreign corporations that have frequently absorbed the lion’s share of tourism revenues in the major mass beach destinations across the Mediterranean basin.

In terms of their macro-economic standing there is a significant gulf in both the levels of economic development as well as the volume of tourist arrivals that continues to divide Mediterranean Europe from its counterparts on the southern and eastern shores where per capita incomes are on average around half or less than the north shore with the exception of Cyprus and Israel (see UNWTO 2016). In addition to the problems of chronic unemployment, poverty and indebtedness southern Mediterranean states also face mounting challenges associated with population growth. While in 1985 the approximately 350 million inhabitants of the Mediterranean basin were distributed relatively evenly between north and south by 2025 the southern shore will account for two-thirds of the expected 600 million inhabitants that will reside in the region (Buades 2014: 22). The distribution of tourist arrivals across the Mediterranean basin is also highly uneven, ranging from 68 million arrivals in Spain, the world's third highest recipient, and nearly 40 million in Turkey, to figures that are considerably lower in areas of the war torn east of the region. And as for Turkey, situated at the cross-roads of Europe and the Middle East in more than mere geographical sense, its historically high volume of tourists has clearly been reduced since the arrival to its south of Daesh/Isis, the refugee crisis, and other features of political instability. There are significant regional variations too in the competitiveness of the tourism sectors, as measured by the World Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, currently topped by Spain (WEF 2015).

At a conservative estimate given the unreliability of national statistics, the Mediterranean region receives approximately 250 million international tourists each year. Three-quarters of these arrivals are concentrated in

just five countries (in order of importance: Spain, France, Italy, Turkey and Croatia) not all of which can be strictly speaking considered as part of the Mediterranean basin given their substantial touristic offer in the hinterland. Given such volumes, which of course does not account for the considerable movements of domestic tourists, as well as the various other, often over-lapping flows of labour migration and refugee movements, it is perhaps unsurprising that the political dimension of tourism has been ignored in favour of an emphasis on tourism's economic and development potential.

### **Tourism and the building of states and nations**

During the period of European colonial rule, travel to the Middle East was predominantly framed by Orientalist discourses through which travelers imagined themselves witness to a cultural landscape that remained essentially unchanged since Biblical times (Daher 2007: 7). But throughout the Mediterranean processes of state formation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became intertwined with periods of autocratic rule and the embrace of economic liberalism, often at the same time. Additionally, there was widespread adoption of tourism both as source of economic growth, contributor to political legitimacy, and the construction of more or less uniform narratives of the normalcy of the 'nation'. Indeed tourism was embraced as an instrument of nationalist propaganda in several Mediterranean states for the purposes of constructing and projecting a particular image of the 'nation' both outwards as well as inwards towards the domestic populations, particularly where strong regional and sub-national identities were seen by central government as 'problematic', as in Spain. During the dictatorial rule of Metaxas (1936-1941), for example, Greece embraced

the potential of tourism as an instrument of nationalist propaganda and in so doing celebrated Greece's plethora of ancient sites, monuments and national costumes as emblematic of the (young) nation's 'eternal national glory' (Dritsas 2009: 52). In Spain, although initial steps to promote tourism had already commenced at the beginning of the twentieth century, after the Second World War the authoritarian regime led by General Franco (1939-1975) saw tourism as means to bolster a reinvigorated patriotic nationalism, less tainted by the legacy of the Civil War (1936-1939) and as a means through which to 'siphon political capital from the putative market value of Spanish national identity' (Crumbaugh 2006: 11). Modern mass tourism thus became, as indeed it did elsewhere in the Mediterranean, a powerful symbolic cultural setting in which authoritarian regimes and state technocrats sought to define and remake the image of the nation and to integrate their economies into the wider circulation of capital.

Examples of the power of tourism related discourse to shape nationalist sentiments are readily to be found throughout the region, particularly clearly in Cyprus and Israel/Palestine. Thus, for example, in her examination of the Canbulet museum in Famagusta, Scott (2002) has shown the ways in which narratives about the Turks as enemies and potential colonial occupiers of Cyprus in the Ottoman period, have become transformed since the Turkish military intervention in the island in 1974, into stories and cartographic representations of the Turkish nation as saviour of the Turkish speaking part of the island's population. In the Israeli case Selwyn (1996) has shown how tours for both internal and external tourists organized by the Society of Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) are specifically designed to inculcate amongst its followers feelings of deep connection between the landscape and the Israeli nation.

By contrast the tours organized by institutions such as the Alternative Tourism Group (ATG) and the Jerusalem Tourism Cluster (JTC) are composed quite specifically to draw out version of the symbolism of landscape that stresses cosmopolitan nature of Jerusalem and the region more generally. Whilst this chapter was being written an initiative was announced by the (Israeli) Kfar Etzion field school to map out a hiking trail in what the Israeli authorities term “Judea and Samaria”, that is the occupied Palestinian territories, to supplement Israel’s National Trail, which runs inside the country’s internationally recognized frontiers. The SPNI has confirmed that it will consider how to support this so-called “Eastern Trail.

### **Tourism, uneven regional development and spread of capitalism**

Prior to the emergence of the modern Egyptian state (1953) and the creation of the ‘post-mandate’ states of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Territories, travel to such ancient archaeological sites as Palmyra, Baalbek and Ephesus, as well as pilgrimage centres such as Bethlehem and Jerusalem in the eastern Mediterranean and the great cosmopolitan towns and cities of Aleppo, Alexandria, and Constantinople was already well established. In both Greece and Turkey, the inter-war period saw attempts by their respective authoritarian and statist regimes to stimulate the development of hotels and tourist activity focusing in the main on ancient archaeological sites. Nevertheless, tourist numbers remained low and the infrastructure inadequate. It was only after the Second World War, following unsuccessful attempts by modernizing elites across the region to establish competitive industrial sectors during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that Spain, Greece, Turkey and Tunisia in particular began to look to mass beach tourism in



order to compensate for weak and uncompetitive industrial sectors and as an effective short-cut to economic modernization. In Tunisia, a country whose only other major export at the time of independence was phosphates, President Bourguiba (1956-1987) mobilized the resources of the newly independent state to drive economic modernization and integrate Tunisia into the post-war world economy. Hazbun (2008: 6) recounts how, in addition to an instrument of economic development, tourism was perceived as a demonstration of Tunisia's commitment to 'modernity' and 'openness'.

The precipitous post-war expansion of tourism within the Mediterranean region was not simply an outcome of the timely intersection between rising disposable incomes in the industrialized capitalist states of the north and 'enlightened' endogenous statist interventionism in the south. In the cases of Greece and Spain, the influence of the United States was felt in the form of substantial inflows of foreign aid and private capital channelled into the construction of tourist facilities. Between 1968 and 1970 over fifty per cent of all foreign investment in tourism was US capital (Leontidou 1998: 106). Since the war, US tutelage of post-war Greece was strongly motivated by a fear of the Communist 'threat', one that had been shared by Churchill. Despite the illiberal nature of Franco's regime, Spain too was the recipient of US loans and was critical to the post-war balance of power in the Mediterranean given its strategic location at the cross-roads of the Atlantic, Europe and North Africa (Crumbaugh 2009: 24; Pi-Sunyer 1979: 58).

In the Eastern Mediterranean, the waning influence of the European colonial powers was supplanted by the growing influence of the United States in the post-war politico-economic order in the Middle East. United

States government backing for the expansion of international US hotel consortia and its major commercial airlines into the Mediterranean and beyond – Pan American Airways and TW - was integral to the emergence of Beirut and Cairo as regional transit hubs (Hazbun 2015). More importantly, as Hazbun notes, the closure of Israeli airspace to Arab carriers after 1948 followed by Nasser's programme of nationalization in Egypt after 1953, in conjunction with US backing for Lebanon's Middle East Airlines (MEA), were key factors helping to establish Beirut as a cosmopolitan centre of tourism and commerce in the 1950s and 1960s before this was overshadowed by the rise of international air piracy and the Lebanese civil war in the mid-1970s.

The impressive rates of growth and annual increases in per capita income experienced in the major mass beach destinations of Spain, Greece, Turkey and Tunisia during the 1960s and early 1970s is often seen as evidence of mass tourism's profound capacity to bring about 'transformative economic development in southern European and Mediterranean states, in the absence of viable economic alternatives (Butcher 2003: 24) In addition it has also been argued that tourism laid the foundations for the dissolving of existing social hierarchies and was a catalyst for democratization of Mediterranean societies (Pack 2006: 191-5). Yet, not only has tourism prospered alongside authoritarian regimes in Egypt, Greece, Tunisia and Turkey, Crumbaugh (2009) and Pack (2009) have both documented how Spain's transformation from statist autarky and dictatorship to a modern capitalist economy was part of an explicit state-managed programme of economic liberalization designed to enhance the political legitimacy of Franco's dictatorial regime and smooth Spain's peaceful integration into the international liberal order of 'democratic' states. Rather than herald the disintegration of the regime

the ‘iron fist of the Franco dictatorship was usually well hidden from tourists’ (Löfgren 1999: 174). The democratic deficit associated with the centralised direction of tourism was keenly felt in Catalonia, where hostility to tourism amongst Catalan regionalist parties was premised on precisely Franco’s support for tourism as well as the regime’s attempt to annihilate all traces of regional cultural-linguistic difference (Pi-Sunyer 1977).

By the early 1980s, despite the transition to democracy in Spain and Greece, and the electoral victory of modernizing social democratic parties in both countries there was a remarkable ideological consistency with regard to the state’s attitude towards the promotion of tourism. This period was concomitant with the accession of Greece and Spain, along with Portugal, to the European Community and the deepening integration of Mediterranean states into global capitalism and the intensification of tourism as instrument of capital accumulation. Although the 1970s witnessed increased social unrest and the transition to democratic rule across the European Mediterranean, the consistency with which tourism has been promoted by all political parties has hardened as indeed have attempts to foreclose popular critiques of tourism and its increasingly problematic consequences.

By the 1970s the shortcomings of the state-led development of tourism in the southern Mediterranean were becoming all too apparent. The failure to upgrade ageing hotels and resort stock together with the growing influence of integrated, transnational tour operators whose ability to amalgamate suppliers across different countries and enabling them to squeeze profit margins, precipitated a transition towards a greater role for markets and private enterprise in the political economy of Mediterranean

tourism. In Egypt and Tunisia policies of *infitah* or economic liberalization were implemented within a year of each other in 1970 and 1971 (Hazbun 2008: 11; Steiner 2008: 947). The principal effect was to increase the volume of private capital (domestic and foreign) investment channelled into the development of integrated luxury resort enclaves in previously undeveloped coastal locations. The onset of the oil crisis in 1973-74 triggered a downturn in tourism as arrivals and receipts momentarily fell (offset by increased oil revenues and remittances from workers in the Gulf). The aftermath of the energy crisis was marked by two further factors of significance – the recycling of ‘petro-dollars’ into luxury real estate and resort developments in Tunisia (Hazbun 2008: 28), and the opening up the Sinai - Red Sea coast to tourism investments as a result of the cessation of hostilities between Egypt and Israel (Richter and Steiner 2008). Significantly, however, state policies of privatization and economic liberalization not only provided a much needed boost in tourism revenues, throughout the region, autocratic Arab states have been sought to embrace globalization and stabilize their economies through tourism while simultaneously ensuring that the ‘neo-patrimonial structure of power’ remains unchallenged (Steiner 2006).

Despite the important role played by developmental states and the prevalence of autocratic governments along the southern Mediterranean shore, top-down policies of tourism development have always co-existed alongside spontaneous and unregulated private initiative. Despite what often appears to be an emphasis on large-scale tourism capital and international consortia in many parts of the Mediterranean, in reality there is great deal of variability and a diversity of ownership arrangements in which the vast majority of hotel/tourism firms are made up of small, family-run businesses and informal traders.

## **Class, liberal democracy, and persistence of patron/client networks**

In both the eastern Mediterranean, as well as Greece and Spain, wealthy families, networks of kin, prominent expatriate capitalists (including elite shipping and oligarchic-dynastic families in the Greek case, landed bourgeoisie in the Spanish case) and/or rich expatriate capitalists (often linked closely with one or both of the above familial categories) have been involved in the financing and running of iconic luxury hotels and other tourism businesses from an early period (Daher 2007: 25). In Spain, two of the most powerful transnational hotel and resort corporations originating in the Balearic Islands, Barceló and Riu, grew to prominence as a result of close links that were cultivated between their owners and the Franco regime in the 1950s (Buades 2009 28-39). In Lebanon, a country that is heavily dependent on tourism and trade, a ‘Consortium’ of thirty oligarchic families with business interests spanning finance, industry, construction, transport import-export agencies and public sector contracts came to prominence in the late 1940s and 1950s and controlled a range of tourism assets including the iconic St George’s and Bristol Hotels as well as Air Liban and MEA (Traboulsi 2012: 116-7).

However, a salient feature of a number of many such dynastic families is their commitment to philanthropic causes. While the Barceló family have close ties to the Catholic order of Opus Dei, Daher (2007: 19-20) notes how a number of elite/notable families in the Middle East have supported a range of philanthropic ventures, financing heritage conservation and museums dedicated to the preservation of local cultural traditions, including the Saida Soap Museum and Bsous Silk Museum in Lebanon. Capitalism (as it exists within the tourism and hospitality spheres) in parts

of the Mediterranean is thus not so much a coherent system of economic and political relations (as it is claimed to be in western/northern states) but more one aspect of uneven systems of relations interlaced with principles of patronage and clientage.

The transition to democracy experienced by the tourism-dependent economies on the north shore and the transformation of deficit-led state-run economies into liberal capitalist ones did little to uproot entrenched systems of patronage and clientelist practices. Rather than bring about far-reaching democratic political institutionalization they merely adapted and reconfigured the state to their own needs co-opting key interest groups and upwardly mobile fractions of the bourgeoisie into their networks of patronage and influence (Kurth 1993: 53). Despite concerted attempts by newly elected social democratic parties in Greece and Spain to introduce measures to constrain excessive urban expansion and reconfigure tourism towards a more sustainable model with more equitable distributive outcomes, resistance to the imposition of land use and conservation planning measures remained strong amongst both the rent-seeking bourgeoisie as well as emergent class of small entrepreneurs (Briassoulis 2003: 106). In Greece, the electoral victory of PASOK in 1981 promised a radical restructuring of the economy towards those who had been excluded for the economic gains of the past but in fact, the emphasis on small to medium-sized tourism enterprises resulted in the indiscriminate expansion of urban construction and unregistered accommodation as small-scale entrepreneurs sought to cultivate ties with local party officials in order to access to state funds, much of which was then channeled into speculative real-estate investments (Petras *et al.* 1993: 182).

In Spain, where the transition to democracy was more associated with a more forceful implementation of neoliberal economic reforms the result was nevertheless not dissimilar. In this case the closure of protected state industries and rise in unemployment was followed by the precipitous expansion of finance, construction, real estate and low-wage/low productivity tourism services throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. Particularly in those regions where tourism is predominant share of the economy (Andalusia, Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Catalonia, Valencian Region) an upwardly-mobile rent-seeking urban/landed bourgeoisie colluded with public authorities, fueling the spectacular growth of untrammelled, speculative real estate-tourism developments throughout the nineties and into the twenty first century (López and Rodríguez 2011: 17).

As numerous ethnographic studies have shown the arrival of mass tourism in the Greek Islands, in a process also witnessed in parts of rural Spain, Portugal and southern Italy, helped to precipitate the transition from agrarian to capitalist societies during the 1950s and 1960s (eg., Kousis 1989; Stott 1973; Zarkia 1996). The rapid insertion of tourism into these societies paved the way for upward social mobility and the emergence of new strata of small-scale entrepreneurs from amongst the peasant and fisher communities, as well as returnee migrants from the mainland in the case of the Aegean islands (Kenna 1993), who opened and operated a large number of small to medium-sized tourist enterprises. Furthermore, a small but upwardly mobile class of capitalist entrepreneurs grew out of what often began as small tourism businesses that later grew into large domestic consortia which were highly influential in the political sphere such as the Grecotel-Daskalontakis and Sani Groups in Greece (Dritsas 2009: 64).

Despite the rapid economic modernization and undoubted improvements in living standards and state revenues brought about by the considerable scope and scale of tourism development across the region since the 1950s, tourism has intensified rather than weakened many of the structural deficiencies of Mediterranean political economy (see Charnock *et al.* 2014: 48-49). In the absence of industrialization tourism has accentuated the flow of investments into easier and more profitable avenues, including construction and real estate, and thus intensified speculative over productive investments. In what are often described as ‘*rentier*’ or indeed ‘semi-rentier’ systems (Steiner 2006: 171), the accumulation of capital is generated predominantly through exploitation of access to land and other strategic resources (eg., raw materials, leases, remittances and aid transfers) or else the manipulation of tightly controlled markets (monopolies) at the expense of productive investments in enterprise, innovation and improved labour productivity (Richter and Steiner 2008: 942-3). Where tourism is a strong feature of local economies, profits are mainly generated by capturing rents from the anticipated future returns on strategically placed land and other property assets.

Such rentier systems of accumulation have been prevalent throughout the Mediterranean since the nineteenth century (Sapelli 1995: 66-7). However, the role of tourism has often played an important part in accentuating its predominance, both in authoritarian states as well as in those states that have experienced a transition from oligarchic and authoritarian rule to various forms of parliamentary democracy. In the absence of industrialization tourism has often been a major force of urbanization, especially so where mass beach tourism is predominant. In



so doing it has helped to shape the class character of those regions, as noted earlier in relation to entrepreneurship. Families that migrated to large-scale resort areas for work often maintained a foothold in agrarian economies thereby reinforcing the continuity of family-based networks of patronage and clientelism inhibiting the affirmation of democratic political values characteristic of mass-industrial societies (see Bianchi and Santana 2004).

### **Heritage marketing and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership**

So far we have identified a number of economic and political factors and processes (including the uneven path of capitalist development, the continuing salience of patron/client relations, the imperfect passage to democratic governance) that, taken together, help us understand an initiative of considerable politico-economic importance undertaken by the European Parliament and Commission in 1995. The so-called “Barcelona Process” launched in that year consisted of complex strategic agreements between the EU and Mediterranean states. EC Spokespersons explained that the main purpose of the “Euro-Mediterranean Partnership” set up in Barcelona was to further the efficacy of the “market” in the region thus raising the economic level of those countries, including Greece, which had joined the EU 1981, Spain/ Portugal (acceded in 1986) and the partner states on the Mediterranean’s southern shore (cf CEC, 2002, 13). The EMP would thus not only raise living standards and spread democracy (or both) but, by so doing, also make a substantial contribution to greater security in the EU itself. But the EMP was also important for strategies and agreements having to do with education, cultural heritage, and (thus) tourism.

The Barcelona Process thus combined and interwove politico-economic designs with cultural ones. “Culture” thus came to be subsumed within the overall scheme. What is now referred to as “cultural heritage” was brought into the market place – to be bought and sold like other products. A number of EC research and development programmes of work by academic partnerships of universities and research centres in Europe and partner Mediterranean states were undertaken to demonstrate the fundamental cultural unity of the region. These programmes were underpinned by a dual and contradictory set of philosophical and historical principles. On the one hand they reflected, as we have implied in various ways above, a certain cultural unity in the region that had existed for millennia. On the other hand they were part of a wider EU based project to impose neoliberal restructuring on southern Mediterranean states. The main aim, according to the EC, of the EMP was, and remains, to enhance competitiveness and stimulate economic development in the Mediterranean region and to integrate the southern shore further into orbits of European capital accumulation – remaking Mediterranean cities and neighbourhoods into suitable avenues of profitable accumulation for mobile transnational capital.

This is the background under which urban spaces and historic sites across the Mediterranean are being converted into ensembles of attractions and commodities to be consumed by a growing market of high-spending cultural tourists – a process accentuated in the case of ‘flagship’ heritage development projects orchestrated and financed by international donor agencies – further dismantling the dense social mix/socioeconomic diversity of such communities and disrupting long-standing ties between diverse resident communities and the urban fabric of historic

Mediterranean quarters and ‘heritage’ sites as they are integrated into a globalised commodity economy for tourism (see Daher 2007: 27-41).

### **Tourism, refugees and regional re-bordering**

Despite the rich legacy of antiquity, the abundance of archaeological ruins and cultural heritage across North Africa and the Middle East, the imbalance in the volume of tourist arrivals and distribution of revenues from tourism between the northern and southern shores, can partly be attributed the region’s ‘fragmented geopolitics’ (Hazbun 2008: xxxix).

Thus, to point to one historical moment as an example, there was a brief window of geopolitical stability in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the peace agreements between Israel, Jordan and Egypt as well as the Oslo Accords of 1994. But by the end of the twentieth century, after a period of more or less uninterrupted expansion of mass travel, terrorist bombings and violent civil conflicts disrupted the eastern Mediterranean tourist trade and threatened to reconfigure the political and economic geography of contemporary Mediterranean tourism. Direct and indirect attacks on civilian targets and sites of cultural significance resulted in a reduction of tourist numbers in parts of the region as a result of perceptions of risk and insecurity. The most dramatic collapse has of course been experienced by Syria, whose numbers and revenues have all but disappeared after reaching a high of 8.5 million arrivals and US\$6.2 billion in tourism receipts in 2010 (UNWTO 2016). The origins and motives of the attackers quite diverse despite most being attributed to ‘militant Islamic’ groups, although it is important to bear in mind that violent attacks on tourism installations that have also been perpetrated by more ‘conventional’ separatist movements, ETA (Spain) and the PKK

(Turkey). In addition, southern European resorts are not immune from the violence associated with the spread of global terrorism as the 2016 ‘Bastille Day’ attack by a disaffected youth from the *banlieux* of Nice demonstrated.

Events of these kinds have seen the Mediterranean increasingly transformed into a militarised frontier between the impoverished migrants and persecuted refugees from the global South seeking refuge in Europe, and those fully entitled to ‘the collective fiction of universal rights’ that comes from being a European citizen, including the right to the freedom of movement and travel, and those who are not (Calori 2015).

The terrorizing of tourists and tourism spaces and concomitant securitization of travel and border politics is underpinned by a discursive framing of the ‘tourist’ in contra-distinction to ‘migrants’, ‘refugees’, and ‘terrorists’ (often seen as interchangeable categories) further reinforcing tangible economic cleavages and forms of political exclusion that define and shape the militarism and securitization of Europe/European resorts. Border fences have been erected Bulgaria, Hungary and Macedonia. The EU has made an agreement with Turkey to detain refugees in exchange for visa-free travel and a payment of €6 billion. The EU has also instructed Greece, a country already buffeted by years of economic crisis exacerbated by EU/troika-mandated austerity, to contain refugees within its borders. The re-territorialization of state power and concomitant re-bordering of the Mediterranean, together with EU political backing for the violation of one of the most fundamental codes of maritime conduct – the obligation to assist those in peril at sea - threatens to rupture long-standing ties of culture, exchange, and trade between peoples along the Mediterranean shore and to further atomise and fracture the tentative

unity and open-ness upon which decades of mass travel throughout the Mediterranean basin have depended.

Despite the many atrocities that seek to turn local communities against tourists, there have also been notable demonstrations of bravery shown towards tourists during such attacks (eg. see Stephen 2015), as well as touching acts of compassion and solidarity between locals & tourists in the aftermath of the violence. Although thousands of tourists left in the immediate aftermath of a fatal terrorist attack on the Tunisian resort of Sousse in June 2015, which left 38 people dead (30 of whom were tourists) there have been notable acts of defiance and solidarity shown towards Tunisian hosts (Marlowe 2015). In addition, neighbouring Algeria, a country that has experienced its fair share of political violence, expressed its full solidarity with Tunisia and promised to launch a solidarity campaign to boost the already substantial flow of Algerian tourists to Tunisia (Traboulsi 2015).

Additionally, despite the often hostile and xenophobic reactions displayed towards refugees by populist nationalists throughout Europe and in some sections of the media, residents on the Greek Island of Kos and a number of visitors and tourists have rallied to lend humanitarian assistance to as many of the hundreds of thousands of refugees who've arrived on the island since the summer of 2015. One resident stated: 'This is hospitality. People with nothing understand more than people who have everything', alluding to the collective memory of past hardship and the more recent experiences of struggle related to the Eurozone crisis (cited in McVeigh 2015).

## **Tourism as resistance**

The above paragraphs lead us into our penultimate section. Our direction of travel so far in the chapter has stressed the extent to which tourism has been incorporated into the broader global and regional project of bringing the Mediterranean region further into the orbit of organised capitalism, the free market, and ideological and symbolic emphases on the centrality of state and nation (rather than images and ideas that stressed cultural unities within a cosmopolitan region). As we have pointed out this has involved the simultaneous marketisation and nationalisation of cities and tourist related heritage sites. Moving towards a conclusion we return to observations we have made earlier about those tourism initiatives that are self consciously critical of the ways in which tourism has been used in this way.

To start with there have been diverse forms of civil society resistance against speculative real estate and excessive tourism developments (Cavo Sdero in Greece, Nivica in Albania, Save Beirut Heritage in Lebanon, for example). On the island of Malta, since the early days of tourism development the focus of environmental protests has shifted from concerns to do with the protection of flora and fauna from excessive urban development to social justice and the democratic use and organisation of space (Boissevain (2004). More recently a wave of anti-austerity movements (eg. *Indignados*, Spain) arising in the wake of the Eurozone crisis, have engaged in increasingly direct and forceful acts of resistance against speculative real estate-driven tourism. In Barcelona, the radical new mayor and former anti-eviction activist, Ada Colau, has galvanised local neighbourhood groups and activists in the former working class neighbourhood of Barceloneta, and has offered support and

solidarity to what have become increasingly frequent protests targeted at the US-based on-line booking agency, Air B'n'B.

There are other examples of tourist related movements of resistance to tourist related developments. The political and legal actions of those groups opposed to the Hilton project in Malta described by Boissevain (2004) may be compared to the activities of the Mallorca based institution *Arca* which has led demonstrations against the eviction of poor (and often gypsy) residents in the centre of Ciutat de Mallorca at the same time as celebrating the extent to which this capital city has been shaped by its mixture of Christian, Arab, and Jewish residents.

In Palestine the success of such groups as ATG and JTC (see above) has been powerfully (and equally successfully) complemented by such Israeli groups as *Zochrot* and *Emek Shaveh*, the former running tours to destroyed Palestinian villages in Israel, the latter taking tours to the disputed neighbourhood in Jerusalem of Silwan with the aim of challenging the idea, put forward by the Israeli authorities, that this largely Palestinian neighbourhood was, and should be seen to be part of the (Jewish) "City of David".

## **Conclusion**

The geographical placing of the Mediterranean involves taking both a regional and a global view. The former suggests that the Mediterranean may be defined in relation to the sea itself whilst the latter takes the global passage through the region of traders, pilgrims, diplomats, refugees, tourists, and others, as evidence that the region is pre-eminently a central part of a much wider world.

Mindful of the above, and noting that the politics of tourism in the Mediterranean have been relatively under studied, this chapter has suggested that there are several good and interconnected reasons for pursuing the topic. We have thus pointed up the extent to which tourism and the main political and politico-economic currents in the region have been interwoven since the early days. We have described how tourism has been put to use in the interests of spreading capitalism as well as to the advancement and promotion of ideas and practices having to do with state and nation being foundational principles of social and cultural solidarity. But we have also noted the use to which operators of ‘alternative’ tours have been using tourism to resist these notions in the name of regionalism and cosmopolitanism. We have described the ‘unevenness’ of tourist related capitalist development, pointed out that patron/client relations continue to cut across emergent class structures, and that the economic gap between the north and south of the region continues to widen. One implication here is that any attempt to explain violent attacks on northern tourists in the south would need to start from such regional economic inequality as well as the complex political fissures that cross-cut the region.

We have argued that these political, economic, and politico-economic features necessarily form backgrounds to explanations and explorations about of the place of “cultural heritage” in the region. Thus we have identified contradictory tendencies. Whilst mainstream tour operations (typically flowing from private sector initiatives aided and supported by national and international government) sell commodified versions of heritage to tourists and international media, alternative versions (sometimes involving different sites and spaces) of heritage are being



used to construct more critical narratives. We identified some of the many issues raised by the deployment of tourism related cultural heritage, particularly questions about who decides what heritage to display to whom – in other words, about the nature of the political and institutional processes engaged in the heritage project.

We may conclude by framing the Mediterranean in terms of the contradictory social facts of cosmopolitanism and multi-cultural coexistence, on the one hand, and narratives about the primacy of ‘ethnic’ and/or ‘national’ identity, on the other. The question that arises for students of politics of Mediterranean tourism concerns the relationship between these alternative social and cultural orders and a cultural heritage shaped increasingly (and increasingly uniformly) by an emboldened market economy and the febrile politics to which it is bound.

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